

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

FIREBREAK

(FEET)
Code 394

DEFINITION

A strip of either bare land or land supporting fire-resistant vegetation.

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied in a conservation management system to protect soil, water, air, plant, animal and human resources by preventing the spread of wildfire or to control prescribed burns.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all land uses to include cropland, hayland, rangeland, forestland, wildlife land, and pastureland where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

CRITERIA

Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent and shall consist of fire-resistant vegetation, either cool or warm season (See Critical Area Planting, Code 342); (Pasture, Hayland, Planting, Code 512) non-flammable materials, or a combination

Firebreaks will be of sufficient width and length to contain the fire.

Firebreaks will be located to minimize risks to the resources that are being protected.

The selection of species for vegetated firebreaks will be based on their attributes in retarding fire and ease of maintenance.

Firebreaks shall be designed so that erosion control measures will prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Comply with applicable laws and regulations and follow recognized Best Management Practices (BMPs) developed for Louisiana.

CONSIDERATIONS

Existing barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds, roads, drainage canals, railroads, utility rights-of-way, and cultivated land should be used as firebreaks when they are present.

Firebreaks should be located on the contour where feasible to minimize soil loss by erosion. Firebreaks on erodible steeper grades should contain waterbars or diversions at frequent intervals. Discharge water into undisturbed vegetation outside the burn area when possible.

Attempt to locate firebreaks on ridge crests and in valley bottoms. If winds can be predicted, locate firebreaks perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Plants selected for vegetated firebreaks should be beneficial to wildlife if compatible with the purpose.

Plans and Specifications

There are four types of firebreaks adaptable in Louisiana:

1. Plowed or disked
2. Burned
3. Combination road and firebreak
4. Grazed

These should be constructed to connect to existing barriers when possible.

A. Plowed or Disked Firebreaks

1. Parallel to roads and adjacent to woodland boundaries.
2. Along property lines.
3. Within woodland areas if necessary.
4. On contours where feasible.

Construction

1. Plow or disk strips a minimum of 6 feet wide.
2. Turn flammable material under.
3. Fire plows, disk harrows, and other types of plows can be used to construct this type of break.

B. Burned Firebreaks

1. This type of firebreak is primarily used along existing roads.

Construction

1. Plow or disk two furrows a minimum of 10 ft apart around the area to be protected.
2. Remove any large flammable material such as logs or limbs from between the furrows.
3. Burn the area between the furrows on a calm day. (See Prescribed Burning Code 338)

C. Combination Road-Firebreak

1. New roads should be located to best serve as fire protection for the woodland as well provide access for timber management. (See Access Roads. Code 560). Old roads can be used for firebreaks provided flammable material is removed.

Construction

1. Roads should be a minimum of 10 feet wide to sufficiently accommodate one-way traffic. Avoid short steep slopes. Elevate road beds slope to each side to divert water and locate on contour. If possible (See Access Roads. Code 560).

D. Grazed Firebreaks

Location

1. Where domestic livestock are present in sufficient numbers to keep firebreak properly grazed.
2. Parallel to roads and adjacent to woodland boundaries.
3. Parallel to property lines
4. Within woodland areas if necessary.
5. On utility rights-of-way.

Construction

1. Double disk strips a minimum of 16 feet in width. Firebreaks within woodland areas should be a minimum of 30-50 feet wide to provide sufficient sunlight to allow plant growth.

2. Plant to species best suited for site and for wildlife. Lime and fertilize according to recommendations (See Pasture and Hayland Planting, Code 512).

Maintenance

1. Rework plowed or disked firebreaks at least once annually before the fall or spring fire season.
2. On burned firebreaks, burn the strip as often as necessary to eliminate flammable material.
3. Remove all flammable material from road at least once annually and clean out drain ditches at the same time before the fall or spring fire season on the combination road- firebreak.
4. On the grazed firebreaks, grazing should be sufficient to avoid accumulating cured grass and other vegetation. It may be necessary to mow if these accumulations occur. Fertilize as often as necessary to improve palatability enough to keep firebreak properly grazed.